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ABSTRACT

The teaching of positive or alternative discipline techniques to the legal family, who work toward having their children returned to them, does not currently occur at the private foster care agencies with which the children are placed. Therefore this practicum has been implemented to address this need. The children moving from the foster care system back into their legal homes require stability in many areas, including discipline. This refers to teaching disciplinary techniques other than spanking or corporal punishment. A program was proposed for legal families to become familiar with alternative discipline practices used by many of the foster parents within the foster care agency. The word "alternative" is used to imply techniques other than spanking. The practicum project was to teach and make available to legal families and care-givers positive and alternative discipline techniques by meeting with the parents at a convenient location and designing a curriculum. A pre-test and a post-test were used to measure knowledge of alternative disciplines, knowledge of support groups and persons within their communities, and any increase in confidence the legal family may have gained.
(Author)

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Alternative Discipline Techniques for
Parents and Care Givers of Children Returning
Home from The Foster Care System.

by

Robin L. Ward

Cohort # 56

Running Head: Alternative Discipline

A Practicum Proposal Presented to the
Master's Program for Child and Youth Care, and
Family Support in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the degree of Master of Science

NOVA UNIVERSITY

1993

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ABSTRACT

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Alternative Discipline Techniques for Parents and Care Givers of Children Returning Home from the Foster Care System.

Fortlauderdale: Nova Univerity, Masters Program in Child and Youth Care Administration.

Descriptors: Discipline, Alternative, Foster, Care, Techniques, Positive, Training, Legal, Family, Teaching, Non-aversive, Re-unification.

The teaching of positive or alternative discipline techniques to legal family, who work toward having their children returned to them, does not currently occur at the private foster care agencies with which the children are placed, and therefore this practicum has been implemented address this need. The children moving from the foster care system back into their legal homes require stability in many areas, including discipline. This refers to teaching disciplinary techniques other than spanking or corporal punishment.

The author proposed to facilitate a program for legal families to become familiar with alternative discipline practices used by many of the foster parents within the foster care agency. The author uses the word "alternative" to imply techniques other than spanking. The practicum project was to teach and make available to legal families and care-givers positive and alternative discipline techniques by meeting with the parents at a convenient location, designing a curriculum, and using a pre-test and a post-test to measure knowledge of alternative disciplines, knowledge of support groups and persons within their communities, and any increase in confidence the legal family may have gain.

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction and Background

An agency which specializes in difficult-to-place children is the setting for this practicum. This agency provides specialized foster care for children who might otherwise be placed in more restrictive or institutionalized settings. The agency serves as a "bridge" for children who temporarily cannot live with members of their legal families. The staff works along with trained foster parents to teach the foster child how to implement a problem solving lifestyle through setting goals and re-directing energies from negative toward positive action in goal achievement, using reality therapy techniques.

The agency is comprised of ten branch offices, all based in or near a large, basically urban area. The author is a program coordinator-in-training/caseworker at one such satellite office. Each office works with children who have special needs, including medical needs, difficult to place teenagers, pre-teens, teenage mothers with children, juvenile probation referrals, and other children and infants with

special needs. The branch office, which will be discussed further in this report, is located approximately one hour northwest of a large urban city. This particular branch places children ranging in age from newborn to 18 years old. The children served at the office present a wide variety of difficulties. Some participate in the independent living program, some receive therapeutic legal visits, others need intensive individual therapy, some are involved in specialized educational programs, some are in need of intensive medical care, others require psychotropic medications. All of these conditions qualify them for placement in a specialized foster care setting.

This agency derives its budget in the following manner. Approximately 85% of the agency budget is funded through the different counties which contract with it. Another 10% of the budget is provided through grants, and 5% is generated from charitable contributions. Each placing county establishes a service contract, containing a menu of services, on a yearly basis, and the placing county agrees to pay the agency for services on a determined level-of-care

basis. There are some children who are termed "regular" who require no additional services medically or otherwise. Other children are considered under the label of "specialized" level of care because they require therapy or other services to meet their needs. Additionally, there is a mother/baby level of care in which a teenage mother and her child live together in a foster home. Also, there are supervised, independent-living level-of-care rates as well as independent living arrangements. Finally, there is a series of Medical Levels for foster children, ranging from I to IV depending on the severity of the child's medical needs.

The branch office referred to in this report is comprised of three caseworkers, a home recruiter, the secretary, the program coordinator-in-training/caseworker, and the program coordinator. Each of these individuals is a full-time staff member. Caseworkers carry caseloads of up to sixteen children; the program-coordinator-in-training carries a maximum of fourteen. The program-coordinator-in-training carries a somewhat smaller caseload to permit time for other administrative responsibilities as assigned. These additional responsibilities include (1) the supervision of

one caseworker, (2) editing and signing paperwork in the program coordinator's absence, (3) planning and implementing monthly foster parent training sessions, (4) facilitating staff meetings as assigned by the program coordinator, (5) providing support to staff members and to foster parents, (6) mediating in extremely difficult situations between the caseworker and the foster parents, and, finally, (7) making administrative decisions in the absence of the program coordinator as necessary.

CHAPTER 2

Study of the Problem

In light of the fact that there are an "estimated 500,000 children currently in out-of-home placements in the child welfare, juvenile justice, and mental health systems in the United States" (Wells & Biegel, 1992, p. 21), research conducted by this author indicate that the legal family would benefit from receiving parenting training, through the foster care agency, prior to the children being returned to them. This report focuses on just one aspect of that training, i.e., to teach legal parents alternative or positive discipline techniques in dealing with their children ranging in age from six to ten years old.

"Depending on the family's presenting problems, workers may help parents learn positive child-rearing skills instead of punitive and abusive patterns through short-term, task-centered treatment" (Berry, 1992, p. 315). This training should be conducted in an effort to: (1) ease the transition for the children when they move back into the legal family home by providing stability in discipline

practices; (2) provide legal families with alternatives to corporal punishment and spanking; and (3) lessen the anxiety of the legal family by teaching the disciplinary techniques which have proven successful with their children while in the foster care system. It is noteworthy, in the literature, that "Families were best served and more likely to remain intact when services were concrete, such as the teaching of family care, supplemental parenting, medical care, help in the securing of food and financial services" (Berry, 1992, p. 320).

Documentation of the Problem:

The need for the legal family to receive parenting training prior to the child returning home can be documented in casenotes, individual service plans, family service plans, and court orders. Casenotes contain conversations with various team members citing the need for legal parents to receive parenting training. The case workers define in the individual service plan and/or the family service plans the need for such training, and, finally, the court will require the legal family to seek parental skills training in the court orders. Of the 57 children now in foster care through

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this particular branch office of the agency, at least 25 legal families are known to have the requirement of receiving parenting training prior to the children being returned to them. Approximately 40% of the office's children remain in the foster care system because their parents have not fulfilled at least this requirement.

The following table is a review of the discharge of each client and to whom the child was discharged, compiled from the statistical reports completed quarterly by the program coordinator.

Table 1

Number of children returned home with legal or extended family members since fall 1991 when this office opened.

Year	First Quarter	Second Quarter	Third Quarter	Fourth Quarter
1991	N/A	N/A	N/A	0
1992	2	5	4	5
1993	4	-	-	-

This table does not include those children discharged to adoptive homes or transferred to another foster home or

agency.

Of these children released to legal families, twelve were to have attended parenting training or counseling. One legal mother confessed to a foster mother that she was afraid to have the child come home because the child was doing so well in the foster home and the legal parent did not know if she could do equally as well in disciplining the child.

This agency does provide alternative discipline and positive discipline teaching to its foster parents and could provide the same training to legal families. "The literature suggests that family involvement is here to stay. Despite the potential difficulties in undergoing the necessary role differentiating between various treatment staff members and the changing attitudes to see 'Parents as partners;' there is a general consensus that the inclusion of family members in treatment agencies has beneficial long-term results" (Krueger & Powell, 1990, p. 128). The continuity in disciplining techniques will help the children re-adjust from the foster family to their legal families as well as relieve the pressures, anxiety, and lack of confidence in parenting so evident in legal families. In addition to the benefits

stated above, Hess et al. state, in an article on group orientation for parents of children in foster family care, that "relationships between parents and caseworkers were felt to be improved" (Hess & Williams, 1982, p. 464).

The state code for the administration of county children and youth programs clearly states that counseling services should be provided as "(1) supportive and therapeutic activities provided to a child or a child's family and directed at preventing or alleviating a condition...

(2) Parent education. Practical education and training for parents in child care, child development, parent-child relationships and the experience and responsibilities of parenthood" (PA Code, 1989, 3130.35). Here it is required for the legal family to receive parent training in an effort to provide the necessary services to alleviate the familial difficulties.

Since the state requires foster parents to receive discipline training as part of their orientation training prior to even having a foster child live in their home, then it would make sense to put effort into having the legal family also receive training in this area. The agency takes a strong stance on the importance of continued parental

training of or for its foster parents, and for the same reason it would be conceivable for the agency to provide this type of training to legal families.

Analysis of the Problem:

In its codes, the state requires all foster parents to receive training in discipline, punishment, and control of foster children. "The FFCA shall provide an orientation for new foster families before placing a child with them. The orientation shall include information about: ... (4) FFCA policies and procedures for discipline, punishment and control of foster children" (PA code, 1989, 3700-7). Beyond even the state guidelines for the foster parent training, the agency provides the foster parents with monthly training sessions on various topics, including the often requested "discipline" trainings.

This author believes it is unrealistic to expect the legal families to feel as confident and supported as the foster parents do simply because the legal families have not received in-depth discipline training as is the case with foster families. It is, therefore, the opinion of this author that the agency should provide training to the legal

families much as it does to the foster families. In support of this perspective, Milner reports, "Agency responsiveness to the child's parents, when viewed as a direct influence on duration of foster care, does not carry the weight of other variables observed, although it is highly correlated statistically" (Milner, 1987, p. 120). Such training would encourage the legal families to strive toward having their families reunited, and it would provide stability to the children during that time of adjustment. "When existing policies and programs in the child and family sector are assessed, it is useful to examine the extent to which they (1) support natural families, (2) supplement them with day care and other services, and (3) provide substitute services when natural families cannot cope with their children" (Jansson, 1984, p. 324).

The agency does not currently provide this training, due largely to the cost of additional staff to work with the legal families. Furthermore, such training would necessitate the development of proposals to obtain additional funding to cover various materials and other expenses incurred for these services. Howing, et al. relate that "The availability of

federal funds perhaps most significantly determines what services are offered by child welfare agencies" (Howing, Kohn, Gaudin, Kurtz & Wodarski, 1992, p.5). Another issue may be the fact that the agency views itself as providing services primarily and exclusively to the children. This, however, has become less and less the norm in society, as it is widely accepted that the children in the foster care system do not bear the sole responsibility for the problems of the legal family. More accurately, all members of the family contribute to the dysfunctional family unit. "The home is the primary site of service, and the whole family, not the child or the parent, is the client. This foundation emphasizes the importance of treating the family within its own environment and dealing with family interactional difficulties that precipitate abuse and neglect... the services include whatever it takes to improve family relations and keep the family together" (Berry, 1992, p. 314).

Another consideration in providing parenting training centers on the willingness of the legal families to be agreeable to attend these trainings. They may think they can discipline with the same methods used by their own parents,

for example, spanking. Wolfe, et al. explain that "The parent's lack of skill in using effective, non-abusive techniques to teach his/her child pro-social skills and to handle discipline situations, may lead to high rates of aversive behavior by both parents and children" (Wolfe, Sandler, & Kaufman, 1981, p.634).

CHAPTER 3

Goals and Objectives

The goal of this practicum is to teach legal and/or extended family members positive, non-aversive discipline techniques to aid the child in the transition of moving from the foster care system to the legal family by providing stability in discipline techniques. It is hoped that the legal family will experience less anxiety with regard to their disciplinary skills, and may become increasingly confident as parents. In addition, the legal parents may see the benefits of utilizing positive discipline in the care of their children. By "non-aversive discipline," this author refers to an act which is not hostile in nature or archaic in regard to current thought about parent child interactions.

The objectives are as follows:

1. At the conclusion of the training at least 75% of the legal families will be able to list and describe at least two non-aversive discipline techniques when a scenario question is given on the pre-test and post-test.

2. At the conclusion of the training at least 80% of the legal families will know where to find two support groups or support persons within their communities as measured on the pre-test and post-test.
3. At the conclusion of the training, at least 50% the legal families will have an increase of 10% in the aggregated score for items related to self-confidence in his or her parenting abilities, as measured in a comparison of the items related to self-confidence on the pre-test and post-test.

There are many possible solutions to the problem stated. A closer look at the problem presented at this author's particular location and branch office leads to the conclusion that there are several feasible solutions. Some of these solutions are already in effect in the area, while the final one described is the program implemented by this author.

The first strategy is that the legal parents would continue to visit the children while attending a parenting class, which was provided through another contracted or support agency. The coordination of efforts becomes

difficult at best to track because the principles being taught are not necessarily the same as those held by the parent or foster parents. The child is then released to the legal family, following fulfillment of all ordered requirements, with the child having no real sense of continuity with regard to the discipline techniques of the foster parent and those of the legal family. Of the two legal families contacted by this author, both confirmed they went back to using disciplines which they used prior to the children placed in the foster care system. The children in both of these instances were home no more than one year and a half. If there had been some continuity of discipline, the legal family may not have returned to their former disciplinary measures, spanking, but would have implemented the form of discipline which was effective within the foster home.

Another solution might be the participation in one of the four existing sources of legal parent training classes offered at this time to the families. The parents would have to consider one of the following options: attend one of the classes as stated above, requiring much travel; attend a local church parenting-support/training-group; attend a one-on-one training class which offers individual "facilitators"; or be fortunate enough to receive in-home services

either directly through the county or through purchased services.

The church's perspective is that spanking can be supported by references to the Bible. It teaches the parents in its class to spank for certain problems experienced, but not all. The local church parenting group teaches that "We should not chastise our children with anything that is stiff and unbending. A wooden spoon could possibly break fingers that get in the way, cause vertebrae damage if struck too high and damage skin tissue. However, an instrument with flex will sting without inflicting bone or muscle damage since the flex itself absorbs much of the shock of contact" (Ezzo 1990).

The hindrance in this approach is most importantly that the legal parents who would participate in this type of class must hold the same or similar beliefs as the church itself. Also, if a parent would have experienced difficulty with keeping spanking simply a spanking rather than allowing it to lead to abuse or a maltreatment difficulty, he or she should be taught not to physically hit the children, as a precaution for himself/herself as well as for the child. The legal parents situation is often exacerbated by the many

stresses they experience, such as poverty, drug use/abuse, lack of income, lack of housing, and instability of relationships. There are good points to this church disciplinary training as well. It includes suggestions as to what to do following chastisement, including sitting and holding the child while talking to him/her about what occurred to ensure the child understands he/she is still loved.

There is a community service agency which provides a variety of support groups, including survivor groups for sexually abused teenagers, infant child care classes, teenage mother support groups and, at various times, parenting classes. At the time of this writing, there was only a teen-parent support group meeting and an infant-mother program. At the infant-mother program there is a one-on-one facilitator who sits in the room with the mother, assisting in her interaction with the child. This particular program is only geared for infants from newborn to three years old, and consequently the program is quite limiting. The one-on-one facilitator appears to be a good solution because it builds confidence in the legal family while providing

guidance and support. Overall, the premise of the teaching method is solid; however, the lack of parenting classes to address needs of all ages is a concern.

The availability of purchased "in-home" preventive care is another option for the county in working with the legal families. This in-home service requires that a worker be present in the legal family home to address a wide variety of issues. The worker will assist with transportation, locating housing, and other services as needed by the family. This service is, however, usually reserved for those families who have children living at home or is used prior to the children being placed in the foster care system as a preventative measure. This service has merit in that it provides the one-on-one relationship with legal families, often providing the support the foster care agency is unable to provide. While in the home the worker can address many of the legal family needs, not just what the family presents as needs.

CHAPTER 4

Solution Strategy

Proposed Solution:

Legal parents and extended family are provided with training in positive or alternative discipline methods, conducted by the foster care agency at a convenient location and at an agreed upon time.

The agency uses existing material presented to foster families in their training sessions on how to cope with difficult foster children or in the trainings on positive discipline methods. The legal parents are trained, using the same material to give them a better understanding of how the child is being disciplined as well as a better understanding of what that child is experiencing. This author will continue to stress to the legal families that spanking is not the only way to discipline and will encourage positive and non-aversive discipline techniques be used as often as possible. Hess, Folaron and Jefferson state that parents' ambivalence directly contributed to placement reentry or re-unification failure (Hess, Folaron, & Jefferson, 1992). The resolution of parental difficulties

prior to the child's re-unification with the family are a direct factor in whether the re-unification will be successful.

The agency will be fulfilling one of its many responsibilities to the contracting counties by providing this service because it is stated in the state codes that parent training is to take place while the child is in care, to provide resolution to the problems which first necessitated the child's placement in the foster care system. (State Code, 1989, 3130.35)

When this program becomes available there was support to legal family, in the form of parent education services. With these services came more confidence in parenting skills. The legal family often does not participate in the foster care system except for the semi-annual individual service plans and visitations. Visitation is to occur no less than biweekly, but may occur more frequently. With this plan, the legal family fulfilled a requirement to attend a parenting class as well as learning techniques currently used by the foster family in positive discipline. This may result in the foster child making a smoother transition back into the legal

family from the foster care system as well as helping the legal parents become more competent and confident in their parenting skills.

Plan for Implementation Activities and Evaluation:

The disciplinary techniques presented provide legal parents with the same trainings afforded to the foster parents on how to cope with the "specialized" child. The legal parents are provided with a variety of positive or alternative disciplinary techniques in an effort to fulfill the agency's responsibility to the contracting county as well as having the legal parents fulfill a requirement in the court order, family service plan or individual service plan by attending this parent training session.

The agency is focused on and committed to having the children returned to their legal families, as stated in the mission statement. It is this strong commitment which will help facilitate this training. The agency is committed as well to continued education and is open to new and innovative approaches in working with foster children and legal families. The agency could include this service when signing

the yearly contracts with the counties. This would make the service cost-effective because the county would pay just one contracting agency to provide both the services for the foster children and the parent training to the legal parents.

The plan for implementation included: (1) preparing an outline of the proposed training techniques to be used in the class provided to the legal families; (2) developing a list of do's and don'ts from other agencies contacted which are already providing parenting training; (3) confirming the location of the training in writing, and making arrangements made for refreshments; (4) sending a letter of invitation to notify legal families of the upcoming alternative discipline training being offered; (5) finalizing the pre/post-test; (6) reviewing the intended presentation with the verifier; (7) the author placing telephone calls to each legal parent involved with the training in an attempt to address any concerns or issues; (8) asking foster parents to write down two disciplinary techniques which they currently employ in their home to share with the legal family, (9) providing a training in alternative discipline to at least five legal parents; (10) studying the pre-test and post-test

data to identify transfer of learning of the alternative discipline methods, gained confidence and knowledge of community support groups or persons.

Obstacles to Implementation of the Plan:

The author believes the plan is practical and attainable; however, there were four areas which might have caused some difficulty during the implementation phase. One of these obstacles would more than likely have been the decision about, a "common" location for the legal parents to attend the training. As stated previously, this office serves a six-county region. The author planned to address this by examining the number of responses to the training session and then conducting the training at a site in the location of the greatest number of respondents.

The second potential impediment centered on the arranging of transportation for those legal parents willing to attend, but lacking transportation. This author has found other workers willing to assist in transportation of the legal parents to the training.

There are those legal parents who are continuing to use

drugs and will not attend. There are parents in drug rehabilitation centers and prisons who are unable to attend, and there are the legal parents who are incapable of attending this class due to their limited cognitive functioning. There is also the question of what to do if the legal parents decided this training would not be worthwhile and therefore would refuse to attend. In the cases described above, it was this author's belief that perhaps the training could be presented to the legal parent individually at the prison or rehabilitation centers. If there had been no response to the training offered, the author would have contacted those legal parents who were cognitively capable of understanding the training but unable to attend due to incarceration or placement in a rehabilitation center.

Finally, there could have been a larger crowd than anticipated, in which case this author would have needed assistance throughout the training time. There were at least two co-workers willing to assist in this training, should there have been a large group of legal parents wishing to attend the session.

Strategy Employed:

The plan of implementation did not progress smoothly for this author. The first task was to prepare an outline of the purposed training techniques to be used in the class provided to the legal families. This did proceed according to schedule. Weeks one and two of the implementation plan were dedicated to the search for teaching aids and tools to develop an outline to teach alternative discipline techniques to legal families.

The second step of implementation was a bit late in beginning, because the development of the outline was a tedious task. The list of do's and don'ts was developed primarily to aid the trainer in "learning from others" who are already providing this legal parent training. The do's and don'ts list was not compiled until the third week of implementation.

A letter was then sent to the legal families offering an alternative discipline training. The author waited for a response prior to arranging for a location of the meeting. This letter writing occurred during the fourth week of implementation. The author chose not to confirm the

location in writing, due to the fact that the training would be held in the area of most respondents. This was step three.

Step four was the development of the pre-test/post-test to be used in gathering data. This data would then be used at a later time to learn if the legal parents had gained any knowledge or confidence during the training.

Step five provided the author time to telephone each legal family to confirm their interest and attendance at the alternative discipline training. This time was long and difficult for the author because there were so many conflicting schedules and the training had to be canceled from September 10, 1993, and re-scheduled for October 4, 1993, in hopes of having at least five legal family members involved in the alternative discipline training.

Step six involved the re sending of invitations to the alternative discipline training for legal families. The date was changed as noted above.

The author chose not to go over the outline for training the legal families with the consultant due to the fact that he had provided a step-by-step outline of his presentation on positive discipline as well as providing the materials. An opportunity did arise during this seventh step for the author to provide a positive discipline training for foster parents.

This time allowed the author to refine the teaching outline. This presentation to approximately 30 foster parents occurred on September 28, 1993. Although the foster parents did not complete the designed pre-test/post-test, 20 of the foster parents did complete an evaluation of the material presented.

The eighth step entailed the author calling the legal families once again to confirm attendance at the training session. At this time it became painfully clear there would only be one legal family member in attendance. It was at this time the author settled with the fact that the training would occur on a one-on-one basis. This was difficult to cope with as the implementation phase of the practicum would be extended even further to allow time to plan the necessary time with individual legal family members. This was particularly rigorous. The author only found two legal parents willing to meet on a one-on-one basis.

The ninth step took place informally, as the foster parents talked with the author regarding disciplinary techniques rather than formally sending out a letter. The foster parents were extremely cooperative in this and were glad to help out.

The tenth step occurred on October 18, 1993 with one legal family member. One other subsequent training was completed with another legal family representative which occurred on November 10, 1993.

The eleventh and final step of the implementation stage involved the study of the pre-test and post-test data to identify transfer of learning of the alternative discipline methods to use with the children, knowledge of area support persons or groups, and any noted changes in confidence in parenting skills.

It should be noted that the author was uncomfortable with the above noted changes, however must now admit that the one-on-one contact has done a great deal to enhance the relationships with the legal families. The author has more insight into the life of the legal families and sees more clearly the issues with which the family is involved. The author also believes that the legal family has come to trust the author just a bit more after having spent at least two hours talking about children and various issues which occur within the legal family home during the training time. The outline used for the training can be found in appendix F.

CHAPTER 5

Action Taken and Results

The first objective was to have at least 75% of the legal families be able to list and describe the implementation of at least two non-aversive discipline techniques when a scenario question is given on the pre-test and post-test. Using the aggregated pre-test scores as a baseline for the increase in the knowledge of aversive discipline techniques this author found that there was only an 11% increase in the post-test scores in this area. This overall 11% is much less than predicted due in part to the fact that the legal family was able to list several alternative discipline techniques this author had not given thought to, prior to the practicum. There were times during the training when this worker drifted off the outline to deal with more specific questions the legal family had in regard to a specific behavior. This was possible, only due to the fact that after two failed attempts to run a legal family parenting group, the training was done one-on-one with two legal parents. The legal parents were generally very cooperative with the training and seemed to gain a relationship with the author as well as gaining knowledge.

The second objective was that at the conclusion of the training at least 80% of the legal families will know where to find two support groups or support persons within their communities as measured on the pre-test and post-test. There was an overall gain of 166% in the knowledge of the legal families in this area. Again, the aggregated pre-test scores were used as a baseline for this. The parents were able to parrot back what support groups were available; however, it was impossible to measure whether they will use this information.

The third objective was that at least 50% of the legal families would have an increase of 10% in the aggregated score for items related to self-confidence in his or her parenting abilities. Using the pre-test as a base line, this author found that legal families gained 21% overall in the area of confidence. The legal families did appear to rate themselves fairly highly in the area of confidence, and this author believes there could be many reasons for this. One of the reasons may be that they simply do not realize they have some misgivings about their confidence in this area. The legal parent may not understand that discipline

can be implemented in many different ways. The parent could indeed feel confident in his/her ability in parenting the children. Finally, the legal parent may not have accurately rated themselves for fear of admitting some lack in this area.

The author found that, after spending at least two hours with each participant, the relationship was improved in many ways. The overall increase in knowledge of non-aversive techniques, support groups and confidence was 66% by the legal families. This percentage was derived by taking the percentages obtained by each legal parent and averaging them.

The solution strategy employed by this author differed greatly from the proposed solution due largely to two factors which arose during the implementation phase of the practicum. The larger of the two factors was the lack of response from the legal family from two separate invitations sent by this author. There had been a group scheduled for September 10, 1993, which was canceled due to lack of interest and then re-scheduled for October 4, 1993, which was run on October 18, 1993, with only one legal parent

attending. It was at this point that the author began the task of seeking other legal parents willing to spend time one-on-one with this author to complete the training. This, in the end, turned out to be a beneficial change, because this author thinks that the relationship with the legal parents was enhanced and that the author was able to answer questions more directly and privately with regard to the legal family's own situation.

The second major change in the implementation strategy was that the training was done with a group of approximately 30 foster parents at a training session on positive discipline on September 28, 1993. It was fascinating to note the positive responses from the foster parents to this training. Although this author could not have the foster parents complete a pre-test/post-test as designed for legal parents, there was a standard evaluation completed by twenty of the attending foster parents. The results are based on an evaluation rating scale 1 = not satisfactory, 2 = poor, 3 = average, 4 = good, and 5 = excellent. In addition, there were three "yes," "no," and "maybe," questions to which the foster parents responded.

The results were as follows. On the presenter's knowledge of the topic, 20% believed the knowledge of the presenter was average, while 70% thought the knowledge was good, and 10% thought the presenter's knowledge was excellent. Regarding the content of the training, 30% thought it was average; 65% thought it was good; and 5% thought the content was excellent. The way the presenter handled the training was scored 20% average, 50% good, and 30% excellent. The value of the training was rated 30% average, 50% good, and 20% excellent. Compared to other foster parent trainings, this was considered 55% average, 30% good, and 10% excellent. When asked if the foster parent learned something new, 55% responded "yes," 15% "no," and 30% "maybe." When asked if this training would be one he/she would recommend, 85% answered "yes," and 15% "maybe." When asked if this training would be useful to the foster parent, 65% said "yes" and 35% "maybe." The author thought that although the results were not all excellent, a solid program had been developed, and would be extremely useful in teaching both foster parents and legal families.

CHAPTER 6

Conclusions and Recommendations

Conclusions:

Initially this author proposed to facilitate a program for legal families to become familiar with alternative discipline practices used by many of the foster parents within the foster care agency. The plan was to : (1) ease the transition for the foster children when they move back into the legal family home by providing stability in disciplinary practices; (2) provide the legal families with alternatives to corporal punishment and spanking; and (3) lessen the anxiety of the legal family by teaching the disciplinary techniques which have proven successful with their children while in the foster care system.

The overall results indicate that there was a small gain in knowledge of alternative disciplinary techniques, a significant increase in the acquired knowledge of support groups and persons in their areas, and a small gain in confidence.

The results appear to indicate that this author did not take into account some non-aversive disciplinary techniques the legal family may already employ. The results also

appear to indicate that there is not a lack of confidence on the part of the legal parents involved with this training, as they expressed they had a good deal of confidence.

It is difficult to explain why most of the identified participants did not wish to attend the training. One explanation could be that the legal family was not able to see past their own addictions (drug/alcohol) to attend such a meeting. Next, the author would consider the fact that some of the legal families were unable to read, due to cognitive limitations.

The following percentages were configured using the pre-test as a baseline. The difference was found between the pre-test and post test scores. That difference was divided by the pre-test score then multiplied by 100 to arrive at the above stated percentages.

The data collected indicates that objective one was not met. There was an increase of only 11% over the pre-test baseline in the area of knowledge of alternative discipline techniques. Objectives two and three were met. There was an increase of 166% in knowledge over the pre-test baseline

for objective two, and a 21% increase over the pre-test baseline for objective three. These goals were knowledge of support groups or support persons and increased confidence in parenting skills. Although it would have been desirable for more of the legal families to have responded so that a group training could have been implemented, this author found that the one-on-one contact with the legal families was enlightening and enhanced the over all tone of the working relationship. This one-on-one teaching method is highly recommended for future program implementations. The alternative discipline program can be easily implemented at foster parent orientation in addition to being presented to the legal families. In fact, it is a requirement for all new foster parents to receive orientation training prior to receiving a foster child into their home, and this could be used in that orientation training.

Continuation:

Following the implementation and basically positive evaluation from both legal families and foster parents, the training program (1) is available for use in the orientation

of the foster parents, (2) can be used to help legal parents of children in the foster care system to acquire knowledge and confidence in the area of positive/alternative discipline, and (3) may assist the legal parents toward the goal of re-unification with their child.

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APPENDIX A
Letter of Invitation
to Legal Family

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Date

Legal Parent Address

Dear Legal Parent,

For the past four years, Children's Choice has been orienting and training foster parents in ways to teach and discipline foster children. This program has been so successful that we now want to extend it to the parents and other care givers of the children in foster care. We think that this program will help your child in the move from foster care back into your family.

Teaching self-discipline to children is a hard job. The most important part of that job is the ways we choose to discipline them. We are so satisfied with the results our foster parents have gotten, we want to share with the same successful discipline methods with you.

Please R.S.V.P. by September 10, 1993 by calling 1-800-355-1016 between the hours of 9:00 am and 5:00 pm. If you need assistance with transportation do not hesitate to call.

This training will assist you in your goal of reunification, and hopefully provide you with more strategies in disciplining and coping with your child/ren. It is not

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mandatory that your attend this training, however you will find it beneficial ~~that~~ your child is returned home to live with you. Sincerely,

Robin L. Ward, BSW

cc: County worker

APPENDIX B

Letter to foster parents requesting two
discipline techniques they find effective
with the foster children.

Date

Foster Parent
address

Dear Foster Parent:

I am writing to ask your assistance in completing my Master's Degree. I will be implementing a two-hour training on alternative disciplinary techniques for legal parents. The family (s) of the children in your home have been invited to attend, and the training will be held in September.

In order for me to complete the implementation of this training program I would like for you to write down at least two disciplinary techniques which you find effective. These techniques will be shared with the child's legal parents in an effort to provide stabilized disciplinary methods for the child upon discharge from foster care.

I would like to have your responses by September 10th so that I can adequately prepare for this training. Thank you for your cooperation in this project.

Sincerely,

Robin L. Ward, BSW

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APPENDIX C
Pre-test/Post-test

PRE-TEST/POST-TEST

- 1 = NO 2 = SOME 3 = AVERAGE 4 = GOOD 5 = COMPLETE
1. DO YOU FEEL CONFIDENT IN YOUR ABILITY TO DISCIPLINE YOUR CHILDREN WHEN YOU DO NOT USE SPANKING? 1 2 3 4 5
 2. DO YOU THINK YOU WOULD VARY YOUR DISCIPLINARY TECHNIQUES IF YOU KNEW OTHERS? 1 2 3 4 5
 3. DO YOU FEAR YOU SPANK YOUR CHILDREN TOO MUCH? 1 2 3 4 5
 4. AFTER AN ALTERNATIVE DISCIPLINE TRAINING, DO YOU BELIEVE YOU COULD USE THE TECHNIQUES TAUGHT? 1 2 3 4 5
 5. DO YOU KNOW WHERE TO RECEIVE ASSISTANCE FROM A SUPPORT GROUP OR PERSON IN YOUR AREA? 1 2 3 4 5
- IF SO LIST:
- 1.
 - 2.
6. DO YOU KNOW OF ANY DISCIPLINE TECHNIQUES OTHER THAN SPANKING WHEN YOUR CHILD CONTINUES TO SAY NO TO YOUR DIRECTIVES? 1 2 3 4 5
- IF SO LIST:
- 1.
 - 2.

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APPENDIX D
Original Implementation Plan

Implementation plan and activities:

Task:

1. The author will prepare an outline of the proposed training techniques to be used in the class provided to the legal families. The author will create this outline of positive or alternative disciplinary techniques by using the materials already gathered as well as trainings already utilized by the foster families.

Time:

Week 1 and 2

2. The author will develop a list of "do's and don'ts" from other agencies contacted which are already providing parenting training, such as those agencies providing "preventive" services or in-home services. This list should include the teaching methods, times of trainings, and the number of meetings they have found most helpful in their experience.

Time:

Week 2

3. The location of the training will be confirmed in writing, and arrangements for refreshments determined.

This letter will be sent to the program Coordinator of the office utilized. The number of necessary tables and chairs needed will be noted.

Time:

Week 3

4. By letter the author will inform and notify legal families of the upcoming alternative discipline training being offered to them. The letter will be sent to each family, requesting their presence at the training and noting the time and location of the training. This letter will have an R.S.V.P. date as well. The legal families will be able to reply by telephone, using the agency's 1-800 number.

Time:

Week 3

5. The pre-tests and post-tests will be finalized in an attempt to obtain the data collection the author is seeking as well as provide training to the legal families. The author will clarify all unclear questions to ensure accurate information is gathered.

Time:

Week 4 & 5

6. The author will review the intended presentation with verifier, seeking assistance where necessary. The author will provide the verifier the material to be presented in outline form.

Time:

Week 6

7. The author will call each legal parent involved with the training to remind her or him of the dates and times of the session. Transportation will be discussed and, if possible, provided to legal parents. Directions to the training location will be provided to all legal parents.

Time:

Week 7

8. The author will ask the foster parents of the legal family planning to attend the session to write down at least two methods of discipline they use when disciplining the legal parent's child/ren. This will be accomplished by telephone and mailing of a letter to the foster parents. The foster parents will be asked to mail their responses to the author.

Time:

Week 8

9. The author will provide a training in alternative discipline to at least five legal parents. A pre-test will be given at the beginning of the 2.5 hour class, and a post-test will be given at the end. The author will receive assistance if necessary from co-workers interested in helping in this area. The author will only focus on the teaching of alternative discipline in one training session of those children from ages six to ten years old for this proposal. Role playing will be utilized for this session.

Time:

Week 9

10. The author will study the pre-test and post-test data to identify transfer of learning of the alternative discipline methods to use with their children.

Time:

Week 10

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APPENDIX E
List of Do's and Don'ts

DO'S AND DON'TS

DO

1. START THE PROGRAM ON TIME
2. END THE PROGRAM ON TIME
3. PROVIDE A REST TIME
4. PROVIDE NAME TAGS
5. ENCOURAGE THE PARENTS TO INTERACT
6. ENTERTAIN AS MANY QUESTIONS AS POSSIBLE
7. BE NATURAL

DON'T

1. USE FIRST AND LAST NAMES (FIRST ONLY)
2. PRESENT SOMETHING YOU HAVE NOT ALREADY SAID YOU WERE
GOING TO
3. APPEAR AS IF YOU WERE STUDYING THE GROUP
4. PRETEND YOU HAVE ALL THE ANSWERS
5. RUN THE MEETING LONGER THAN SCHEDULED

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APPENDIX F
Outline of Alternative Discipline Techniques

The pre-test is given

I. Difference between punishment and discipline

- A. Punishment: to be penalize
- B. Discipline: to teach

II. Typical Responses but ineffective:

- A. Statements of fact: "you're still not doing what I want"
- B. Questions: Why don't you listen to me?
How many times do I have to tell you?
What am I going to do with you?
- C. Begging: Please do as I say.
- D. Threatening: Demand the child to behave and don't follow through with what you have threatened.
- E. Verbal Put-downs: You are a bad child.
- F. Unrealistic threats: You'll wish you didn't live here if you do it again.
- G. Overly severe punishment: you can't ever have a friend over again.
- H. Physical responses that release anger: hitting

III. Nonverbal communication:

Is just as important as what you say. Use non verbal communication to maximize the impact of your words.

- A. Stay calm
- B. Look your child in the eye
- C. Touch your child when you speak as this is a clear indicator of your sincerity.

IV. Effective responses:

- A. The Look
- B. The Broken record: Keep repeating what you want over and over without reacting.
 - 1. Do not answer questions
 - 2. Do not let the child manipulate
 - 3. Insist on what you want
- C. Catch them being good
 - 1. praise both verbally and non verbally
- D. Make good on the consequences.
 - 1. consequences should be provided as a choice. Your limit setting consequences need to be spelled out to your children so that they can make the choice as to whether or not the consequences will occur.

2. Consequences should be provided as soon as possible after the child chooses not to listen to you.
 3. Be consistent with the consequence - every time the behavior occurs.
 4. Provide the consequence in a matter-of-fact non-hostile manner.
- V. If your disciplinary technique is not working:
Change it.
- VI. Testing
- A. stand your ground. Let the child know you mean what you say.
 - B. "I don't care" child
 1. Keep in mind the child is trying to manipulate you.
 2. Be prepared to be inconvenienced by having to follow through with the consequence.
- VII. Privileges: has to be what your child wants
- VIII. Positive contract
- A. Basically an agreement between you and your child that states "when you do what I want, in return, I will provide you with something you want." Be specific.
- IX. The post-test is given